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FAX

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TO: State AF/C Kevin Aiston
 Fax #: 202-736-4872
 FROM: Embassy Kigali.
 SUBJECT: Draft Cable - Charge's 17 August Meeting With President

Drafted: Pol-Mil: AMarley
 Cleared: Charge: JLeader

SUBJECT: Charge d'Affaires 17 August Meeting With Rwandan
 President Bizimungu

1. Summary: Charge d'Affaires met with the Rwandan President for 90 minutes on 17 August in an unsuccessful effort to extend the timetable for the withdrawal of French troops from the Humanitarian Protection Zone. The Rwandan Government accepts that some refugee flight from the HPZ will occur as the French withdraw, but believes that a positive French public statement in support of UNAMIR and the GoR would prevent a massive outflowing of refugees. End Summary.

2. Charge d'Affaires Leader, accompanied by AF Pol-Miloff Marley, met with Rwandan President Bizimungu at his Kanombe residence on 17 August from 7:30-9:00 PM to discuss the desire that the Rwandan Government allow an extension in the timeline for the withdrawal of French troops from the Humanitarian Protection Zone. The President was accompanied only by the RPA Liaison Officer, Major Frank Rusagara.

3. The Charge explained that the Rwandan Government, the USG, and the international community have a looming problem stemming from the expected flight of refugees from the HPZ following the French withdrawal. The U.S. Government has provided great amounts of funding to respond to the situation in Goma and inside Rwanda, and has asked Congress for additional funding. But if another crisis of the magnitude of Goma were to occur, it will be virtually impossible to conduct a similar emergency relief effort in Bukavu.

The USG recognizes that the Rwandan Government has made great efforts to reassure the populace. Nevertheless, parts of the population are already moving. The U.S. wants to work with the GoR to create a transition that avoids massive flight. The U.S. understands the Rwandan Government's concerns about the French, but believes that GoR extension of the timeline would enhance the GoR's image by demonstrating wisdom, political courage, flexibility, and regional leadership.

4. President Bizimungu responded that the Rwandan Government is grateful for U.S. and international assistance for the Rwandan people in zaire and within Rwanda. He could not agree to such an extension, however, since the French have allowed Interhamwe militia, ex-soldiers, and ex-government activists to operate freely in the HPZ to intimidate people from returning to their homes.

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These activities have even included killings. Such activities are also taking place in Zaire and Tanzania. The international community has done nothing to stop them. Rwanda has asked Zaire's Mobutu, President Mwinyi of Tanzania, ex-President Buyoya of Burundi, and the UN Secretary General to intervene with the French, but they have done nothing. The President acknowledged that the UN Special Representative would like more time for the transition so that the new Ethiopian troops could become more familiar with their equipment and the area of operation. If France were a positive influence, the GoR would permit them to stay. But the GoR would rather have people unfamiliar with the area and the equipment rather than the French who have been abetting these crimes.

5. Charge Leader indicated that the USG could convey GoR concerns to the French, but that we also encourage the GoR to talk directly with the French Government. She then asked the President if he thought there would be an exodus of refugees from the HPZ if the French leave as scheduled.

6. The President said that there will certainly be such an exodus since the French have been actively undermining UNAMIR and preparing the populace to leave the zone. The GoR is convinced that the French want to stay by any means, and that they have a hidden agenda. He said the Rwandan Government has confidence in UNAMIR and prefers a potential exodus to a partition of Rwanda. Future Rwandan cooperation with the French is possible, but the country cannot have a worse situation than what already exists. The French have worsened the situation in the southwest. When the French leave, the international community should look at the conditions in Gikongoro and Cyangugu. No war occurred there, yet they look worse than Kigali.

7. The Charge responded that the USG realizes that it is asking something difficult from the GoR, but that we cannot accept a major outflowing of refugees from the HPZ. The real problem is the presence of militias, ex-government and ex-FAR personnel intimidating the populace. We need time to address the issue and to enhance UNAMIR's efforts.

8. Bizimungu replied that if the French would just issue a public statement of confidence about UNAMIR capabilities and GoR intentions, then no major exodus will occur. There is no need for an intermediary between the GoR and the Rwandan people. If an exodus occurs, it will not be the fault of the Rwandan Government, but rather that of France, the Interhamwe, and even the UN. The GoR blames the UN for giving France a mandate to operate in the

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HPZ, but then for not controlling French actions which are contrary to normal procedures. Rather than having the French stay, the international community should develop a solution that caters to GoR concerns. He then asked if the U.S. would be willing to provide peacekeepers for the HPZ.

9. Charge Leader responded that U.S. peacekeeping troops will not be deployed into Rwanda, so that that was not an alternative. Bizimungu said that if the U.S. is concerned, why should it exclude a good solution. But, if the U.S. could not do it, why not send in Canadians? Why must we attempt to impose people that are a negative influence? The GoR has never said that the Rwandan Army (RPA) will go into the HPZ following the French withdrawal. They will not, since that is not Government policy. But the GoR does not want to be blackmailed by the French.

10. Pol-Miloff asked if, were the French to issue a helpful statement, would the GoR be willing to allow an extension of a few days? That would seem to be of benefit to everyone: the French would publicly state their confidence in UNAMIR and the GoR; the Ethiopians could become more familiar with both the area and their equipment; UNAMIR might be able to create a small border monitoring force inside Rwanda that would operate like the UNAMUR force in Uganda; and the GoR could take advantage of the time to continue meetings with local officials in the HPZ and to begin using well-known returnees like MG Rusatira to help spread the message that Hutus could return to Rwanda safely.

11. After wondering aloud how long would be needed to permit a smooth transition, President Bizimungu said that the answer was still "no." He stated that he is sure that the U.S. concern is genuine, but fears that a French presence will only complicate, rather than facilitate, the situation. He concluded the meeting by thanking the U.S. for its continued interest in Rwanda, for the ongoing humanitarian assistance, and for the frank exchange of views.

12. Comment. After an initial exchange of positions in French, President Bizimungu shifted languages and conducted the balance of the discussion in nearly flawless English, a language he has perfected during his 4-year association with the Rwandan Patriotic Front. End Comment.